

IN THE CLAIMS:

1-9. (cancelled)

10. (currently amended) A rotary knife comprising:

an annular blade having a central axis and an edge defined at one axial blade end;

a blade support assembly supporting said blade for rotation about said axis; and,

a handle assembly connected to said blade support assembly;

said handle assembly comprising a manually grippable handle, and said blade support comprising a head member extending circumferentially partially about said blade and defining a radially inner peripheral portion and a radially outer portion, said handle projecting away from said radially outer portion;

said blade support assembly comprising an annular blade supporting member having a split housing and a clamping assembly for securing said blade supporting member to said head member, the split housing of the blade supporting member allowing resilient expansion for removing the blade from the blade supporting member;

said clamping assembly comprising a clamp member and fasteners for securing said clamp member to said head member, said

clamp member disposed along an inner periphery of the split housing of said blade supporting member and said blade and confronting said head member with the split housing of said blade supporting member interposed therebetween, said fasteners reacting against said radially outer portion to draw said clamp member into clamping engagement with the split housing of said blade supporting member such that selectively reducing the clamping force at one of the fasteners permits expanding the split housing [[body]] to facilitate removal of the blade from the blade supporting member while the split housing [[body]] remains firmly assembled to and positioned on the head member.

11. (original) A housing for an annular power operated knife blade, the housing comprising:

a. an annular, split body defining a central axis and having a radially inner blade supporting section, a radially outer face extending circumferentially about the body, and a body mounting structure extending circumferentially partially about said body on opposite sides of the split in said body;

b. said body mounting structure defining first and second axially extending projections disposed on one side of the split in said body, and third and fourth axially extending projections disposed on the other side of said split, each projection extending axially from the blade supporting section to a distal end, each projection defining a radially outwardly facing circumferentially extending bearing face and a circumferentially extending radially outwardly

opening groove extending between the respective bearing face and said radially outer face, said projection bearing faces extending parallel to said radially outer face;

c. a first housing mounting slot defined between said first and second projections, said first mounting slot opening between the distal ends of said first and second projections and extending axially in said mounting structure to a location substantially adjacent said radially outer face;

d. a second housing mounting slot defined between said third and fourth projections, said second mounting slot opening between the distal ends of said third and fourth projections and extending axially in said mounting structure to a location substantially adjacent said radially outer face;

e. said radially outer face defining a housing body bearing face extending circumferentially along said body mounting structure, said housing body bearing face spaced axially from said projection bearing faces with said groove disposed axially therebetween;

f. an inner bearing face extending circumferentially along the radially inner side of said body mounting structure, said inner bearing face located axially between said blade supporting section and said distal ends of said projections, said inner bearing face being axially narrow compared to the axial extent of either said housing body or said projecting bearing faces;

g. said inner bearing face constructed and arranged so that

clamping force applied to said inner bearing face is transmitted radially and axially through the blade housing to the housing body bearing face and said projection bearing faces for securely clamping said blade housing in place.

12. (original) The blade housing claimed in claim 11 mounted to a blade housing supporting head by a housing clamp assembly, said head comprising:

- a) a plurality of circumferentially spaced clamp faces each circularly curved about said axis and engaging a respective projection bearing face;
- b) a circumferentially extending clamp face circularly curved about said axis and engaging said housing body bearing face; and,
- c) first and second socket aligned with said first and second housing mounting slots.

13. (original) The blade housing claimed in claim 12 wherein said clamp assembly comprises a clamp member and first and second connectors, said clamp member defining first and second circumferentially extending clamping faces engaging said inner bearing face and first and second bosses respectively extending through said first and second housing mounting slots and into said first and second sockets.

14. (original) The blade housing claimed in claim 11 further

comprising a tool engaging slot formed in said radially outer face, said tool engaging slot disposed circumferentially adjacent said housing body bearing face.

15. (currently amended) A rotary knife comprising:

- a) an annular blade having a central axis and an edge at one axial end;
- b) a blade support assembly;
- c) a handle assembly connected to said blade support assembly;
- d) a drive transmission for rotating said blade about said axis; and
- e) a steeling mechanism;
- f) said steeling mechanism comprising a steel, a steel support that supports said steel for movement toward and away from engagement with said blade along a first line of action, and a manually shiftable steel actuator member supported for movement relative to said handle assembly along a second line of action that is neither parallel to, nor coextends with, said first line of action, said steel actuator member operatively coupled to the steel support such that when the steel actuator member is moved in a downward direction with respect to the handle assembly along said second line of action, said steel is moved along said first line of action into engagement with the blade.

16. (previously presented) A rotary knife having an annular rotary blade, a blade supporting assembly, a handle, and a blade drive transmission for effecting blade rotation, said transmission comprising:

- a) a flexible drive shaft unit extending to a location adjacent said blade;
- b) a blade driving output member rotatable about an axis;
- c) a drive coupling arrangement for transmitting drive from said drive shaft unit to said output member, said coupling arrangement comprising:
 - a first drive transmitting surface fixed with respect to said output member and extending generally in the direction of said axis, at least a portion of said first drive transmitting surface disposed on a radial line passing through said axis;
 - a second drive transmitting surface drivingly connected to said drive shaft unit, said second drive transmitting surface engaging said first drive transmitting surface along at least part of its axial extent, said second drive transmitting surface having at least a portion thereof disposed on a radial line passing through said axis when said first and second drive transmitting surfaces are engaged;
 - one of said first and second drive transmitting surfaces biased away from engagement with the other; and
 - a mechanism for overcoming the bias and maintaining said drive transmitting surfaces engaged.